

## WOMEN'S STRUGGLING FOR SURVIVAL IN ANITA NAIR'S NOVELS

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### ABSTRACT

*Women writers in the contemporary world are excited because of the freedom to highlight their capacity as well as to fulfill the task without disguise. They have raised their opinion not only against women harassment but also supported the emotions and practical difficulties faced by the women in the world. Besides, their works also highlighted the struggling of women to survive in the patriarchal society. Anita Nair is one of the Indian women writers who encourage women's identity through her works. This paper deals with Anita Nair's 'Ladies Coupe', which expresses the dynamic view of five different women who are supposed to travel in the same compartment of the train, which goes to Kanyakumari. Akhila is the main character in the novel, who is worried of her lost identity, happens to listen to the other women's bitter experiences in their lives. In her another novel, 'Mistress' she expressed the struggling of Radha who loses her husband by a terrorist attack and how she leads her life miserably later is discussed.*

**KEYWORDS:** Identity, Self-Transformation, Rural Environment, Culture and Custom, Tradition

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### INTRODUCTION

In 'A Literature of Their Own', Elaine Showalter notes that "the middle-class ideology of the proper sphere of womanhood, which developed in post-industrial England and America, prescribed a woman who would be a Perfect Lady, an Angel in the House, contentedly submissive to men, but strong in her inner purity and religiosity, queen in her own realm of the Home." (Elaine Showalter, 1977)

Women writers in the contemporary world are excited because of the freedom to highlight their capacity as well as to fulfill the task without disguise. They have determined to experience the new environment so as to attain the recent resolution. On the other hand they have to acquaint the various hindrances developed by both the genders in the society. The responses are in many ways and so the Indian women writers expressed these issues through their works. They have raised their opinion not only against women harassment but also supported the emotions and practical difficulties faced by the women in the world. Besides, their works also highlighted the struggling of women to survive in the patriarchal society. Women have to face various problems such as their individuality of nation, familial, educational and abundance of status etc. Women's individuality is completely different from the opposite genders. "Women and fiction remain, so far as I am concerned, unsolved problems." (Virginia Woolf, 1929)

Anita Nair is one of the Indian women writers who encourage women's identity through her works. Her aspects are not fictional rather very realistic. She creates her own characters who cannot decide in the complex circumstances but later these characters will transform to the other extreme. She focused these many issues to the

recognition of the public. This is referred not only the prosperous women but also to the fortunate women.

#### **Akhila, the Protagonist of the Novel:**

This paper deals with Anita Nair's 'Ladies Coupe', which expresses the dynamic view of five different women who are supposed to travel in the same compartment of the train, which goes to Kanyakumari. Akhila is the main character in the novel, who is worried of her lost identity, happens to listen to the other women's bitter experiences in their lives. Many writers have mentioned in their writings about the sufferings of isolated Indian women. In the perspective of Nair, marriages are successful now and then due to the give up attitude, adjusting and accepting nature of a few women. The general opinion about women in the society is that they should strictly abide by the culture and custom, tradition of the society where the men have no restrictions. The public domain neither considers women as highly respected nor given much importance. Due to such attitude towards women results in the confusion as well as anxiety in their lives.

A general thought of public, when women step out, they have to struggle a lot to brush out the negative image of women. In this novel, Margaret, a chemistry teacher: who is suppressed by her husband Ebenezer Paulraj, a man of dominancy. Most of the male characters never like their wife to exhibit their talents and individuality. He loves her and worries very much about her physical appearance are identified when he asks her to go for an abortion.

She has to work only for him and no other purpose. She wants to do research but he forces her to do B.Ed. She becomes frustrated a lot because he nags her all the time. She compares people to chemicals like arsenic, bromine, lithium, cobalt, tetra sulphur, tetranide, nitrous oxide and finally hydrogen sulphur.

Janaki, a house wife, dominates everyone in the family but simultaneously is pampered by her husband. Everybody can easily identify that she is highly dependent in the family. In this regard, later her son compares her with his mother-in-law which created a chaos. She is totally spoilt by her husband and son.

All the characters in this novel are greatly influenced by their mother. They teach their daughters how to be a wife, a sister, a daughter and so on, but never teach them how to be like a woman; how to exploit their individuality or to identify their individuality. All the six women longs for their self-fulfillment through self-expression. These characters do not want to be conventional women by following the rites and rituals like the respect towards the Tulsi plant, etc.

Margaret finds her own way of transformation in her life. Earlier, she is dominated by Ebenezer, later she controls him by providing what he loves most. He loves her exclusively only because of her charm and the delicious cooking. She satisfies his love for sex as well as with more food. Ultimately he comes under the control of Margaret. Being a woman, rather lamenting for the fate or taking the other decision, she uses her intellectuality to make him as a slave to her. Then he cannot live without her. The handling of this issue by Anita Nair is well knitted with creativity.

When the novel moves to the next character Janaki, she wants to be superior in her role. She marries a man who much cares only for her. She enjoys her married life till forty years. As days pass on, she comes to know her husband controls the whole family even their grown-up son. After so many years, she gets irritated and agitated towards her husband's attitude. There are a lot of ups and downs in their peaceful life. She finds her pleasure and discovers herself new for the first time. But she could not reveal her from the web which she has created for so long. Her response to the question of Akhila is that the women are not allowed to lead their lives independently rather they always rely on some other person. She further says that women are generally cared initially by her father, later by her spouse and at last by her son. She was saying further that a woman's life always ends with fragility.

The next interesting character as well as the narrator of the novel is Sheela. A girl of fourteen years old is very familiar with her family members like grandmother, mother and father. Her grandmother teaches her the practical life. She becomes much attached with her grandma and this has developed maturity in her life. She seems to be a matured woman among others. The reader could find the three generation in her those are herself, her mother's and her grandmother's too. Her grandmother also teaches the attitude of men. Her father treats like a kid or a child when she tries to show her maturity, and completely controls her.

Next character is Prabha Devi. On her birth, her father comments her as a bloodstained annoyance. Her father is unhappy whereas her mother feels the other extreme. She turns out to be conventional wife. She loves swimming. Through that she finds herself very happy with freedom and identity. The most important character apart from Akhila is Marikolunthu who is abused by the society as she is an Indian woman from rural background. It concludes by saying that most men are making use of woman's illiteracy, isolation, annoyance etc.

#### **Survival of Women in the Novel Mistress:**

Anita Nair highlights the women in the present day world. She deals with the present issues faced by women but she insists that there is always a solution far behind. She finds the transformation in each and every woman which is described by her in different altitude. The sense of independence is very well expressed through the words by the author in the novel.

Anita Nair, in the novel Mistress, Radha has an affair but no sooner her father found it. And so, he forces her to accept for the arranged marriage. Despite of all, he is not creating more tamper to the familial status. Like other Indian women, Radha also do not find an opportunity to express her views in her marriage. Similar to all other Indian women, Radha as well suffers a lot because of her desirous and defends by her spouse.

With no doubt, Radha's marriage life like other Indian women is obviously acquainted with a stranger and that is applicable to all religions. Before the marriage, Radha, had an affair with a married man, who ultimately spoiled her father's good reputation in the society but she is not seriously chastised. No sooner, she did not deny her father and married as per her father's desire as well. The description of her marriage life, discloses with no astonishment, dual strands of both the genders. The bride approves by saying about her impure virginity, he feels the repercussion. But at the same time, in turn when he confesses the similar issue, it is not considered an important matter. When a man commits the same error it does not bring a disgrace to the family but if a woman commits the same, it brings dishonor to the family.

The only choice for all women in their lifetime is selecting their groom but it is not provided so. The decision of not marrying anyone is not the perfect option and it is not favored by anyone in the society. The life of a spinster has no other way rather than staying with her own family members, and to be a part of all familial duties and responsibilities without any forecast. In the case of Radha, marriage is the only option to wipe out her earlier image as none of them are in affinity with her family because of the sin committed by her. According to Indian tradition and culture, women in general are the material of their father's later handed over to husband's after marriage. Nevertheless, bridal desires are cared by any of the grooms; in turn they are alleged to adhere the responsibilities of her new take over. The responsibility does not end up by looking after their spouse but also giving birth to children as early as possible. In the view of men, since older days, women reach a complete form only when she becomes a mother ideally giving birth to a son and so their generation does not come to an end. In some extent, giving birth to a female baby leads to a complicated issue. There is always a warm

welcome of regenerating male babies but not open-minded. As soon as she accomplishes her duty of giving birth the anticipation of a wife gets over. The involvement in the son's birth, when it gets fulfilled, a different issue arises in the older society. In contrast, women's expectation of giving birth either to a female or a male baby is totally different. This respective deal becomes so mechanical in the present day world. 'Isn't it time you had a child? The common question asked by Oppol to Radha and Shyam when they were crossing the second year of their marriage'. (Nair, Mistress: 114).

It is in the hands of the wedded couple in deciding when to have or not. Similar to the lieu of marriage in the life of a single woman, having a child or a few children is considered to be the only prospective, except she is infertile. In case of infertile women, they have to experience some crucial decisions of their second home. Radha is also too much depressed to face the similar experience as she is in her next year of marriage. In the public's view, they name 'macchi' for those who do not have any children. They consider such women as an ill to the respectable family and also not welcomed by anyone in all the functions. It is deliberately accepted an evidence for smooth running of their family only then if she gives birth to a child as a devoted or disciplined spouse. According to men, a male baby has a great concern and a legal asset to the husband. Women in doing so, i.e., giving birth is established the dedication towards her husband. This feature is not only applicable for the arranged marriage but also for love marriage. Apart from all these, she also has various other responsibilities to fulfill her husband of being a good wife. In consideration of having the appearance in thought, it is not significant in pleasing her husband but also to be admired by his friends too.

Husband's expectation is always that wives should discharge their duties very sincerely and dutiful. Her husband suppresses Radha of not allowing in doing anything on her own throughout her life. When she desires to commence a business, immediately her husband screams at her stating that not to tamper his social status in the society and also commands her to perform as a dutiful wife. She responds in turn that none of them is superior or inferior in the society. After this, she gets irritated and locks herself inside a room. As a revolt, she behaves rudely with her spouse but there is poor response from him. He desires her to be under his supervision always and nevertheless reacts to her that they were equivalent to each other. He prefers her spending much time in the beauty parlor and shopping or in the tailor's shop. But the moment when she starts establishing her talent, he puts a full stop for her desire all of a sudden. She inscribes him of saying that she is going to meet her husband's uncle as it does not bring any disgrace to his familial status. She asks her husband that whether anything else she was not supposed to do in the world that he has listed in his criteria. She further asks him permission to become a teacher in a primary school, he replies that would be a hardship for a little amount. Again when she wishes to start up a tuition center, he replies the same. No later she likes to begin a crèche; obviously his response is that the house should not be spread with too many kids. Despite all these, Radha tries to do something different without the intention of making money, then that is also not right in her spouse's view. She asks her spouse that she has no rights to implement any opinion by stating that she is his wife; on the other hand he treats her not as a wife but a common woman under his control. 'A crucial mistress in satisfying his sexual desires with no freedom' (Nair Mistress: 73). His ultimate aim of marriage is to have her as a beautiful wife, pampering her desirable imaginations and also a prefect dependent on him. The couple does not match even in a single thought and their ideologies are completely different. Due to this, Radha suppresses a lot. She correlates with a beautiful butterfly as it ends its life in a biological lab just an assignment assigned to the school students; she feels the agony of flying somewhere away from her spouse.

Shyam symbolizes as a conventional Indian husband overruling his wife in each and every trait. Radha disassociates with her husband, Shyam. According to Radha's view, marriage prevails only in the title of the name i.e.,

from Miss. Radha to Ms. Radha. Marriage is a complete failure in Radha's life as she could not build a bond with him. She symbolizes her marriage as a fracture to Chris, her illegal partner in life. It is just a beginning of relishing her life, as a first move deviously in voicing her toil. A ploy would add taste to her life in dominating her partner simultaneously, a sense of attaining freedom. As a result, frustration and irritation caused by her husband's attitude towards her is the reason to develop an illegal affair with Chris. This might be an opportunity for a vulnerable woman to behave in such a manner when they are humiliated by their spouse whereas soothed by any unknown man would lead to have an affair. Despite of her husband's disposition towards her she found pleasure in being with Chris ultimately. Later she numbs to know that her husband maintains a record of her periods in the calendar. The behaviour of Radha towards Chris seems to be an extramarital relationship. In general, men like Shyam observe the attitude of his wife but he fails in all his efforts. At last when he finds that he could not rule her mind in turn he makes his mind to govern her physically. Husband's fertility would be questioned ultimately when his spouse depended on some X man for seeking pleasure in her life. Shyam, having such situations in his mind, starts owning his relation towards his wife. He further has a thought of governing her body was a complete right of a husband no matter of her desire. Shyam in the novel started behaving very brutally like an animal. Shyam makes her a scar once whereas he satisfies himself with no guilt. Radha while returning to her home meets Chris in a cottage. Often, when women are left uncared by their spouse in some dangerous situations, they never feel reluctant of maintaining an illegal affair with who are really caring for them. Nair's woman is experiencing the two extremes of life. The one is supervised by her husband secretly whereas the other is leading her life with the third person without knowing to her husband. Her search for identification is satisfied by sustaining a relationship with a third man and refusing her spouse in turn.

According to Anita Nair, the attitude of Radha is perfectly right as her selfish husband deserves such behavior. There is no enmity between Radha and Shyam with relation to his attitude towards her. As a matter of fact, she feels thankful to her spouse because it is he, who makes her to react in such a way in finding her identity and also individualistic woman. He considers this as the achievement in her life. She further states that he assists her for not only in finding her a suitable person but also to find her freedom whereas of being calm or reserved or a person of accepting what is granted in her life. Hence Anita Nair's women characters are stepping into a new life through experience. Similarly, Radha feels the most self, as she identifies much energy in her because of the interference as well as dearth of fulfillment in her life. She finds emancipation by eradicating all the bound of wedding, the 'honourable bondage' which she feels with her spouse for so long. Shyam seems as a man of dishonor and disrespect though leading his life with the properties of Radha, annoys her in the title of marriage.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

Anita Nair, a present day Indo-English novelist, writes about the difficulties undergone by Indian women. Her women have a conflict between the traditional and modern lives. She expresses the inferior status of Indian women in the conventional culture oriented Indian environment. These conditions and marginal prevailing in the environment are the rights of Indian women. She also deals with the rapport of husband and wife, the bottled-up pressure of women and finally the sexual harassment of Indian women before and after marriage. According to the Indian women wedding is fixed as final target or chief aim in their lives. Women have to adapt and change themselves according to the situation of their spouse. Due to this adaptability their individuality is destroyed.

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